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Romer Wilson

THE HILL OF CLOVES

THE HILL OF CLOVES

*A TRACT ON TRUE LOVE, WITH
A DIGRESSION UPON AN
INVENTION OF THE
DEVIL*

BY
ROMER WILSON



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THE HILL OF CLOVES

My house is white, it shines in the setting sun. In the moonlight it gleams like alabaster. There is a hedge about it of cypress and laurel and bay. In the evening my neighbours look over my hedge and ask me how I do, and what news there is of heaven to-night.

"The angels sing and praise God," I answer; "their faces are as bland and quiet as this April evening. The Archangels stand four-square waiting the Day of Judgment."

"And what news of yonder hill, Giulio Benedetto?"

"Of the dark hill, the Hill called of Cloves?"

"Yes, what news of our hill?"

"I see four little clouds upon it like doves, and among its groves there is silence. We shall have rain to-night."

The neighbours pass homeward in the twilight and I await one who will enter by the gate.

He comes. He is here. We greet each other in silence and go down together under the cedar where we usually sit. The cedar is pungent in the

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warm damp air, very dark beneath the clear green of heaven and comforting to our thoughts. My friend and I praise God under the eyes of heaven, but beneath the shelter of the cedar boughs we find the solitude essential to friendship.

"Well, Giulio, whither did you go to-day?"

"I passed the day in my house, wrote one or two poems, and spent several hours thinking of Delia."

"Delia is to be married next week to a lad of her own age."

"That does not make me love her the less or wish that I was eighteen instead of thirty. She often comes to my garden, and I make love to her in terms of philosophy, and shall continue to do so until one or other of us is dead and possibly thereafter. Certainly thereafter. It will be pleasant to walk with Delia upon the hills of Paradise and tell her those thoughts which she has given me on earth, and which she now laughs at."

"Tell me, Giulio, one at least of these thoughts, and see if I am wiser than Delia."

"You laugh at me, Rinaldo, and have the right to do so, since you are seven years younger than I."

"No, Giulio, I am serious; imagine we are in heaven and that I have complete understanding."

"Let me stand up then and walk to and fro in the darkness, a little way apart to cover my shame. When one speaks of divine things, one feels a necessity to withdraw a little, and, as I said, to seek obscurity for one's personality out of shame."

"Go then a little way, Giulio, and I will become as silent and unnoticing as this tree."

I rise and walk away a few paces, and fear clutches at my heart, because the words I am urged to speak are not those which one usually declaims to a friend. I begin with a preamble.

"Rinaldo, you are innocent and merry. Sometimes when I have seen you laughing with your rude companions at the Inn, at the Inn of the True Vine, I have thought, 'There laughs a son of God.' Do not blush over there in the darkness, the saints love a merry laugh, and Christ himself suffers children."

Then I sigh, because I find it more and more difficult to speak with that voice which I know is now urgent within me. I shall confuse Rinaldo, and perhaps bring confusion upon myself. But there is no help for it. I must begin or allow Rinaldo to believe I am a coward.

"Now I will tell you," I say at last, "that thought which I have designated the Archangels."

"Four Archangels stand about the Throne, and the eyes of each look outward and beyond, but see naught but God. Grave and serene are the faces of the Archangels, and their eyes of unwinking blue see naught but God. The hair of their heads is like the setting sun upon the sea, and their mouths smile like the mouth of a maid who has conceived, but they conceive naught but God. Their wings lie upon their backs and upon their thighs like morning clouds before the sun has yet risen. At their unfolding they shall be white as day, but not yet. It is between times. The wings of the Archangels lie straight, folded close on back and thigh like clouds above the unrisen sun. Four-square stand the Archangels about the Throne of God. Their eyes gaze outward. They see naught but God."

I pause. My heart is trembling. I wait a word from Rinaldo.

"You say Delia laughs," he says, "yet she has given you this."

"She laughs because she is a child, and children do not fear the Archangels. They call them pretty creatures. She gave me this because I love her. I, being no longer a child, must love, to have eyes."

“And what more do the eyes that love Delia behold, O Giulio?”

“Like Dante, I see heaven and hell with the eyes that love Delia.”

“Describe the Morning Star, which at this time of year hangs in the cherry tree outside my window every morning at bird-call.”

“Lucifer, brightest of stars, brightest of those above the sapphire floor of heaven, if Rinaldo has seen this angel in the cherry tree at dawn, Giulio can show him nothing more true or lovely. It is the star which shone at Christ’s birth, very early in the morning, at the turn of the night, at cock-crow, which first awakened the divine Child. Angels sang in the midst of its light. It is a sweet star, one that comes always early before the world is astir. The first of the day to praise God, the last of the night to praise him. You will find, Rinaldo, that the evening star shines in the hand of Our Lady and is a female, warm, and very tender star, and between this star and Lucifer, which alone among the heavenly lights are as bright by day as by night, there is a very gentle love. This one, this evening jewel that lights our dying, gave us birth, and that you see, which comforted our dying, now lights our birth. Watch these two stars, Rinaldo, and you will see the twin love of Christ.”

"I see, very tenderly, you light Delia's life, so that both her waking and her sleeping shall be comfortable and sure."

"I light my own life, and yours too, and all men's lives who have eyes to see. We can each light the darkest moments of our being with God's grace, if we choose to do so."

"They say you are not a holy man, Giulio, but vain, and fond of your own voice and your own visions. I hear them taunt you over your hedge when the evening sun gilds your eyes: 'What news of heaven to-night, Giulio Benedetto?' "

"Holy or unholy, Rinaldo, thoughts come to me. They gather upon me like the little clouds upon yonder Hill of Cloves, like doves upon a dove-cote. If I am asked, I speak my mind."

"Well, tell me this, Giulio, my friend, how shall a man be saved? Among your many thoughts, perhaps this one has come to you."

"Yes, indeed, Rinaldo, a man shall be saved by the measure of his weakness and damned according to his strength."

"Explain yourself, Giulio, I feel strong, and you make me afraid."

"One good deed of a man weak in knowledge of God will bring him to heaven upon its wings. Did not the thief upon the cross enter heaven for

the sake of nine or ten decent words? But one evil deed of such as I, who see God in glory and know him, will send a man far down the road to hell."

"Giulio, my poor friend, I almost pity you your knowledge of God and his saints, if knowledge brings you so to the brink of hell that you may inadvertently fall in."

"Do not be afraid, Rinaldo. My dog Leo will at least speak for me at Judgment. He is faithful, and the man who can command but the voice of a dog at the Last Day to speak for him will not be utterly damned."

"You joke, Giulio."

"No, I am serious. Many and strange will be the witnesses at the Day of Judgment. Don Quixote will testify for Cervantes, Beatrice for Dante, a dog or cat for this one, an old cloak for another, yes, even trees and stones and inanimate things will shout aloud at the Day of Judgment, 'Save him, he loved me!'"

"Speak of heaven, Giulio. How many heavens be there?—seven, or nine, or one?"

"I know not; for me there are but two, Earthly Paradise and Heavenly Paradise."

"Speak of Earthly Paradise."

"It is green and well-peopled. There you will find all those witnesses I spoke to you of, among

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which I could mention the grasshopper of St. Francis, the lion of St. Augustine, the roses of St. Elizabeth. Yes, and my dog Leo, who will certainly stand up for me at the last, so great is the love between us. You will find there both night and day, both sea and sky. You will meet St. Francis among the dark ilex trees with his companions, and at evening God will walk and discourse upon heavenly matters with those that seek him. I dare say even, Rinaldo, that I shall see you carousing at the sign of the True Vine and making merry in a loud innocent voice!"

"But Heavenly Paradise!"

"Therein is God, his angels and his Powers, and conjoined in him those saints who have upon earth perceived and glorified him. Therein is light, like the burning centre of the sun, and only those whose eyes have become as the eyes of Archangels can behold within the light, more than the light."

"Know you any in this heaven, Giulio?"

"Many of the saints rest here: St. Francis and St. Teresa are two I can call to mind. King David and Moses are names I have also heard in the heavenly music."

"But St. Francis, you said, was in Earthly Paradise."

"So he is. Like Christ he loves men, and they

two often frequent the hills of heaven and walk in the valley of the children of God. They alone, it seems to me, love especially to commune with the simple and the poor. In Earthly Paradise are many who shall never see an angel, but they see God in Christ every day, and his own brother St. Francis. And these two, I tell you, pat many a poor dog on the head, and let birds perch on their hands, and allow the children who have neither father nor mother in heaven to call them by any name they like designating father. Similarly, Our Lady often comes to the little ones and allows them to clamber over her knees, and to call her mother and mama without any holy prefix."

"Have you seen this, Giulio, and can yet live? For my part, if I saw this, I should plunge a knife into my heart in my hurry to attain heaven."

"God might forgive you your simplicity, Rinaldo, but I am destined to a long life, and if I hurried out of it, as you suggest, my impatience would certainly be justly rewarded."

"I am inclined, from what you say, Giulio, to prefer Earthly Paradise to Heavenly Paradise."

"Those who love God, Rinaldo, prefer Earthly Paradise, but those who adore him prefer Heavenly Paradise. Where your heart dwells, there shall you dwell also. In neither case shall you have any regret.

Perhaps, like St. Francis and Christ, you will possess all Paradise. But for this, I think you must become a saint upon earth."

I smile as I speak, for Rinaldo is very worldly, and has many pitfalls before him. But if he becomes a saint down here, I am afraid his fervour for God will cause him to take by the neck and hang all unbelievers.

"Why do you laugh?" says Rinaldo.

"Why? Because I thought if you turned saint, you would be a very devil of a saint!"

"How?"

"Hanging, drawing, quartering in the name of God those slower in virtue than yourself."

"By some it is held that one should do so."

"No man should be deprived of an hour for repentance, no, not even the man who has killed his neighbour. What profits it to send a damned soul to hell?"

"But then we shall be at the mercy of murderers and villains if we do not bring evil-doers to the rope."

"Did I not say you would hang men in Christ's name, dear Rinaldo? There are worse things than sudden death at the hands of a madman, but nothing worse than a just death for a damned soul."

"But he is exhorted to repentance before he is hanged."

"Repentance is not the servant of exhortation, but comes at all hours, as it wills, early or late."

"Ha, Giulio, you are one of those soft hearts, I believe, who strew the way to Paradise with flowers, and languish for Christ in a green field."

"My bitterness is between me and God, Rinaldo," I answer, "but if you care to see it, to see the shame of a proud man, call me before sunrise to-morrow, and we will go upon the Hill of Cloves together and you shall see my sins. God is merciless to the devil, who can often hide himself as a poor man begging alms, and can counterfeit the voice of Christ even, to those of us who have forgotten the full sound of it. But you can know the devil, even when he comes in saintly garments, for he leaves you sick and satiate, and the taste of his words cloy. Many a dose of the devil have I had, and vomited thereafter. On a Sunday evening when the bells ring and incense is in our nose, he comes gently, bearing a green bough in his hand, and leads our fancy to a lush place he calls Paradise."

"I know it well, Giulio, and you find yourself later seeking out a woman to talk holy talk to, and before midnight she is in your arms. It is a shame

to a woman to take her in that way, and you damn both her and yourself with that disgusting poetry.”

“You are right, Rinaldo. I sinned in precisely that way when I was a youth. Her name was Marietta. After a night of the kind you describe, I wept tears of sickly repentance, and on my knees begged her pardon for my shameful betrayal of ourselves. She laughed at me, and told me I reminded her of the clap-trap of the *improvisatori*, who make a romance out of sins of lust. ‘And if,’ said she, ‘you wish to indulge further in poetic self-abasement, I bid you for a penance walk seven times in succession to the top of the Hill of Cloves, once for each hour of the night you lost with me.’ I felt angry then, and in my pride set out to do as she bid me, but at the third ascent I suddenly came to my senses, and laughed heartily, and my sin left me. To-morrow I will show you the stone where for two hours I sat in weariness of my legs.”

“Since then, Giulio, I suppose you have despised human folly and lived a chaste life?”

“No, indeed, Rinaldo, but I have never again disguised myself as a saint when I behaved as a dog.”

“I myself love women, Giulio, and am easily overcome by them. What do you advise in this matter, and how should I conduct myself?”

"If you have the courage of the Turk to burden your life with many women's lives and let your dealings with them all be aboveboard and honest, and also the convictions of the Turk, I dare say you will do very well among your profusion of wives, but if not, it seems to me that you give away part of your soul to each woman you leave, and are likely to be poor in the end."

"What you say sounds sensible, Giulio, but the love of women is a sweet thing to a young man."

"I will not deny that, Rinaldo. But let us say no more on this matter, since I know your generous impulses are likely to beggar you for their sake. Until you have a wife who will hoard your kisses for you, you are unlikely to profit by discussion of your thriftless practices. Nay, if we talk long enough, you and I will begin to talk of our lust in heroic strains."

"We shall compose some worthy poetry then. You to Delia and I to an imaginary mistress."

"For that, let us choose a better time and hour, for our talk is straying now, and we are little likely to make up anything but doggerel at this time of night."

"I see you are tired, Giulio, and so I will leave you, as you probably wish to recover yourself after my rude thoughts."

"Nay, do not leave me yet, Rinaldo," I say, "but let us sit a while in silence, or, better still, you shall tell me how Delia looked when you last saw her, and what hopes are generally entertained of this husband she is to have."

"Forgive me if I do not speak with a lover's tongue, Giulio, but I will do the best I can to please you. I saw Delia in the market square to-day. She looked young and gay. When I asked her how she would like to be married, she said: 'As well as all women and no worse than most.' Her husband, they say, is young, serious and rich, and sets his noble name before anything in the world. He would have been a priest, they tell me, but for the losing of his name."

Thus Rinaldo and I talk small talk for an hour until Sirius is well behind the cypresses, and then we part, promising faithfully to meet one another at the footbridge beyond the town at dawn.

At dawn I go to the footbridge beyond the town. It rained in the night, and mist clings along the stream. I see Rinaldo leaning disconsolately against the parapet of the bridge, with his cloak about his ears and his arms folded upon his breast. He nods with sleep.

"Hail, Rinaldo!"

My voice sounds grey and ghostly.

"Hail, Giulio!"

We meet, and without another word cross the bridge and begin to toil upward through the olive groves. A cock crows.

"'Tis an ungodly hour," says Rinaldo. "Neither my legs nor my head is yet out of bed."

"Nor your stomach," I reply, "for in your impetuosity I dare swear you have not breakfasted."

"You are right, Giulio, I never thought of it."

"Well here is a little bread and two figs which my foresight provided," I say and laugh.

Rinaldo takes them and begins to eat.

"New bread at this time of night, Giulio!"

"Why, yes! Marta, my servant, got up at cock-crow and baked, and also prepared meat and wine and other delicacies which I carry in this bag upon my shoulder."

"What! does she not sleep?"

"Like a cat, in a warm place whenever she can. She has not had the power to command sleep bred out of her like you and I. But see, we are above the mist now, and there are immediate signs of day in the east."

"Ah, I am waking, Giulio! A little drink of wine, I pray you, to cheer my sodden soul."

"Have patience, Rinaldo, until we are free of

these wet olives; then you shall spread your cloak on a stone bench and sit and drink to the rising sun."

"Well and good! It is grey, and as I imagine Limbo looks, in this net of olive trees."

We ascend the rough path in silence for ten or twelve minutes, and suddenly, at a sharp turn, come out into a place covered with ling and short scrub, and find a very ancient seat, which some think is an old boundary stone fallen upon its side. I look upon this stone as mine, for the only word I can discern among the worn letters carved upon it is IVLIVS, and am I not Giulio? I like to think some Roman loved this hill and was buried here for peace. Peace be to him!

"Here's the stone!" cries Rinaldo. "Now I will sit, and not budge until the sun has budged out of his bed behind yonder dark crest. So fish out your wine, Giulio, my boy, and let us pledge the morning."

I fish the wine bottle out of my bag to please him, filled with wine not more carnation than the sky. He takes it and tips it to his lips.

"In the name of the Father, in the name of the Son, in the name of the Holy Ghost, glory be to God this day. Amen!" he cries. And I cry "Amen!"

"Ah, I can see now," he says, and hands me

back the bottle. "How rosy the sky is! Surely Venus and Mars have had a cheerful night! Look how the dew about us sparkles and flashes, and the mist down there clings about the dull old town. She's a prim widow woman who daren't watch the gods get out of bed. Praise to you, Giulio, for dragging me up from her embraces to see this lovely morning."

"In Earthly Paradise you will see the sun rise every morning, and have the heavenly host for clouds, and the light of God for the sun."

"And why should there be night or the light of God ever fail in Earthly Paradise?"

"Nay, the light of God never fails, it is but veiled, for the very sake of this heavenly morning, and for the sake of the deep blue of night, out of which God created the stars and light itself. Have I not said there was all creation in Earthly Paradise? This thing shall be for a memorial of the beginning of creation when God divided light from darkness, and also for a daily renewal of wonder, that the saints in Earthly Paradise may eternally marvel, as they love to do, upon the mystery of the glorious resurrection which led their hearts originally to heaven."

"You tempt me to build a house up here in memory of your words, Giulio."

"For me there is enough house here already, Rinaldo. What more do you want than the sky for a roof and the clouds for curtains?"

"Behold the sun, Giulio! Now the sluggish mists in the valley gleam like the tissue of a fairy's cloak. Our church, the one I remember playing among the stones of, when I was a little boy, is ringing its bells. Surely we are already in heaven, Giulio, I feel happiness stir in me. We have stolen a march on death and have come, betimes, to your Earthly Paradise."

"Now you may know that Earthly Paradise is not a mere invention of a madman's tongue."

"Indeed, dear Giulio, I never imagined it. Praise be to you for your kindness in discovering this blessed place to me. I will leave the town and dwell here, and God shall give me a hut to keep my head dry, for I am not yet a ghost who can snap his fingers at the ague."

"Be sure first that you can endure to see the reverse side of the medal, dear Rinaldo, for Earthly Paradise is only enjoyed on earth with much suffering, anguish and tribulation, and at the sacrifice of all that ill consorts with heaven."

"You are too wise, Giulio."

"I admit my fault. But for my wisdom I should have renounced the world as you wish to do, and

simply remained upon this hill. Now you have seen the first of my sins."

"Well, at any rate, let me imagine that I am quit of the world in this glorious sunrise and have wings to my spirit and no more guile than the birds. See how the poplars in the plain rear their golden spires through the mist. I can hear life beginning to awake down there, the lowing of the oxen, the call of the ploughman."

"So it was in the time of Virgil, if you will remember. The oxen and the ploughman have dwelt in the plain longer than you and I."

"Yes, one feels they have more wisdom."

"Yet we would improve them with our modern learning."

"That is old too, I dare say, Giulio. Did not Archimedes or some old fellow invent a screw to screw water out of a well and thereby wasted a great deal of water before the drought?"

"Whether he caused a drought or not I cannot say, but certainly his invention has not penetrated this valley, Rinaldo, and I hope that neither it nor its like ever will, for with the first machine will come idleness and starvation."

"You alarm me, Giulio, I am endeavouring to make a machine that shall save my mother the trouble of turning her spinning-wheel. It is to be

turned by a water-wheel on the little stream beside our house."

"You alarm me, Rinaldo. Destroy it while there is yet time."

"It is to save that very thing, time, that I am inventing it."

"You are making something, alas, Rinaldo, that will kill not only your mother's time but all the time in this valley."

"Explain yourself, Giulio."

"My instinct in this matter is enough, Rinaldo, for myself at any rate, to cause me to look upon your machine with horror; but since you have probably not such a lively antagonism in your power, for this spinning-wheel is a child of your body, I will tell you what has been observed on the subject by a notable traveller in Cathay."

"Do so, Giulio, we have the day before us, and I promise you that if you can show me any harm to this lovely valley from my spinning-wheel, I will destroy it this very night."

"Then I can promise we shall have a lively conflagration of your hopes this evening, and a burnt-offering to God of your kind thought for your mother, which is a sacrifice that will gild the deed."

"Speak on: I pledge my spinning-wheel against your traveller in Cathay."

"Once upon a time," I begin, "the people of Cathay were even as the people of this valley. They ploughed with the ox and with the patient ox raised water from the well. Their women spun with their hands and the young men walked upon their feet. There was peace and contentment everywhere. The slaves were as sons and daughters to their masters, and sons and daughters were content to be as slaves. I am told that then the poorest wore silk and ate honey, and if tribulation visited the land, it visited all alike. But there came some who brought with them strange machines and devices so that after a while marvellous changes were seen, changes that you and I can hardly imagine, not only spinning machines and machines to make many things that are made by hand, but carts began to go without horses and ships without sails."

"These sound incredible miracles to me, Giulio Benedetto. I can and do believe that for the glory of God his saints are now and then permitted to remove carts and the burdens upon them, nay, to transplant even houses and trees whither they like without cattle to help them, and that the devil by his wicked machinations can make coaches and carts run hither and thither without beasts to draw them along, but how shall men, unless aided by

one or the other, speed waggons over the ground and blow ships about the sea?"

"Well, Rinaldo, let us in the first place remember that man has wickedly eaten of the tree of knowledge and thereby given himself both heaven and hell. In the second, consider how you yourself have conceived a means of substituting a machine for men's hands. Now men are sensible beings, and it should therefore seem to us that to make a machine which will imitate the hands of sensible beings will be harder than to make one which will imitate the strength of senseless brutes. However that may be, I know well that the thing begun will continue, and your spinning-wheel will only be a prelude to a whole world of mechanical creation."

"It may be so, Giulio. Continue your story of Cathay, I pray you."

"At first when these machines were shown them people turned from them in horror; some, even more stirred up, hacked them to pieces and burned those that would burn, crying, 'Take away these instruments of the devil, for if they do the work of men, how shall men live?' Those, however, who introduced them, showed the mandarins and consuls who governed the people that though each machine did in a day the work of ten men, yet so

much more might be made with the aid of them at a trifling cost of time and money, that presently twenty men would be employed where one was used before. By dint of executions, beating, and preaching, the mandarins, who saw great profit from trade as a result of this great increase of manufacture, chained the whole of Cathay in time to these engines. Now, according to the book which my friend translated for me, and which I have no reason to mistrust, began the greatest and the worst slavery the world has ever seen, for the people forgot the use of their hands and were bound to the machine for the very necessities of life. In order to be near the machine, to serve it and live by it, they forsook the country and left the soil untilled, so that farms and good lands lay empty and idle by the score, and they so crowded upon the cities that there was no longer any room therein for each man to have his family in his own house. Then they began to build one city upon another, until six or seven cities lay one upon another as happened in Babylon, and more lately in Rome of the Cæsars, until it was forbidden by law."

"What further mischief came from these engines, Giulio? Your story in its monstrosity reminds me of the wicked history of Heliogabalus, and of that

of the barbarous Egyptians who chained the Israelites to the manufacture of bricks."

"According to the book I mentioned from which my friend read to me of these things, two results came of this unnatural servitude, one of which you may almost guess for yourself. I showed you how the farms were deserted and the soil left untilled. You may easily comprehend how in time there ceased to be an abundance of every kind of food, and when I tell you that in the towns, for a reason which is not clear to me, the people bred like locusts and multiplied beyond imagination, you will immediately see how in the course of two hundred years they were brought to the verge of starvation when any accident of wars or other disaster cut off their traffic with those countries from which they drew sustenance in exchange for their manufactures."

"Do not cease talking, Giulio. Pile up every horror of which you have heard in this connection that I may remember them as a warning all my life."

"Forgive me, Rinaldo, if I cannot give you a complete and consecutive account of this event. The history out of which my friend read covered ten volumes of Chinese character which is very small and compact."

"Give me then a few scattered examples of this people's misfortunes, and I will not plague you for explanations, but take all you say on trust."

"They learnt many evil things from their machines, Rinaldo, of which I recollect but few this morning. For instance, a man learnt to live three lives and be content with none. Women aspired to be men as well as mothers, and both men and women began to go hither and thither at great speed, seeking the old peace they had lost and never finding it. All men and all women began to have one face, a face of discontent and fear, nay, I forget, the book said a face made like a mask, handsome and unlovable, haunted with eyes of fear. Further, owing to the noise of their machines, they grew deaf to natural sounds; their sight also became dim because one among them discovered how to imitate the sun for a few pence. But I have said enough. Now let me come to the end of the story, for fortunately it has an end."

"The story then has an end and the people were delivered from their thralldom?"

"Yes indeed, Rinaldo, and by one man. As one man delivered us all from the certainty of damnation, so by a single individual of great merit the unfortunate people of Cathay were liberated at a stroke from the tyranny which destroyed them."

It happened that an Emperor came to the throne in whose heart the ancient virtues and the ancient simplicity were paramount, and on his first progress through his empire, he beheld with loathing the state of his people. He bade the old books of poetry to be brought to him in which the former ways and customs of the nation were set forth and eulogised, as it might be our Duke would call for the *Georgics* of the immortal Virgil to restore our ancient manners here. Having read therein he took counsel with himself and determined, though half the nation perished, to root out the evil in a single hour. 'Better that half my nation be lost, than that the whole perish utterly and for ever.' He bade the consuls and mandarins cause great pits to be dug outside every city, and on pain of death to fling therein every engine, machine, or wheel turned without hand, and every carriage that proceeded of itself; and to sink in the sea every ship that sailed not in the blowing of the wind, nor rowed with the strength of men's arms. And so it was done, and to this day you will not find even an arquebus throughout Cathay, nor corn that is not ground in the quern."

"Why, this is marvellous to me, Giulio, more marvellous even than the foregoing devilish inventions. But, tell me, surely many starved to

death when ships no longer brought them food from abroad, and many starved before they again learnt the use of their hands."

"Yes, indeed, Rinaldo, but willingly as soldiers face death in war, for the spirit of their Emperor endued them with courage, and they had become, moreover, heartily weary of their discontent and the devil that had gnawed out their hearts. In the book it is stated that a silence came over the land like the silence that precedes the first bird-cry at dawn, but that very soon there arose a poet who wrote a sweet ode in praise of the Emperor, and that suddenly thereafter everyone burst out singing."

"You fill my eyes with tears, Giulio."

"The people of Cathay have long been called the Celestial People, and truly I think they may have found something of Paradise upon earth, though they are a heathen race, for their poetry is sublime in many respects, and my friend tells me their word once given is pure gold."

"I should very much like to know, Giulio, with what words the Emperor persuaded the people of the necessity of his action."

"It would seem, Rinaldo, that he did not stay to persuade them, but condemned the machines to be thrown down at the feet of the gods, in much

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the same words as we give sentence over a stone or tree that has fallen upon a man and crushed him. He in short declared them deodand."

"And this very evening, Giulio, I will declare the same of my spinning machine."

"I rejoice, Rinaldo, but let us destroy it privately, for the less noise your wheel makes at its death the better."

As the sun is now well up in the heavens I rise from my dear stone and say:

"Come, let us walk on if we wish to get to the top of this hill to-day."

"Agreed," cries Rinaldo, who is ever for going forward.

"And when you see this stone again, remember if you will that it is here I lost the sin I sinned with Marietta. At other times too I have received great comfort of it. Really, I believe this stone is the keeper of my senses, for I have come to them here more than once."

Rinaldo bows at that and sweeps off his hat, crying "Good-day, Sir Stone, friend of my friend, thank you for your good accommodation."

We begin our march again up the rough track among myriads of flowers, among bees, and as it were among the light blue airs and transparencies of the valley, which at this hour bathe us and the

hill, so that the town far below appears to lie at the bottom of an airy sea in which we swim.

"Now I pray you, dear Giulio," says Rinaldo as we slowly wind our way upward, "tell me, if possible, what you love best in the world, that, if I am able, I may love it too and so come closer to you in friendship."

"That is no hard matter for me at any time, Rinaldo, nor, I suspect, for any man, to say what in honesty he best loves among earthly things. Surely I love my own soul first, that thing which we call 'I,' and I am sure you love the 'I' in yourself better than all the kingdoms of the earth."

"I do not know, Giulio. Surely one must be a saint for that, and act always so as to bring one's soul to heaven."

"Why, no! Are we not told that Isaac's soul loved a good mess of pottage and thereby he was caused to cheat his firstborn son? And if your soul asks for gold, will you not bring your body in jeopardy of blameful death to content it; or if for God, will you not oblige your body to suffer martyrdom if that should stand between your soul and its desire?"

"You are right, Giulio, but have patience and tell me what your soul loves first, as I should have asked before."

"I think my soul worships content, quiet, and peaceful days, and as you see I take every trouble to satisfy it."

"And for this you will even renounce hope of heaven and sell your hereafter to the devil?"

"Why, no, without hope of heaven I should have no content."

"At what price, then, do you buy peace, Giulio, for I cannot believe that your heart's desire is to be had for nothing, unless indeed you have reached some private understanding with an angel?"

"Maybe, Rinaldo," I smile, "that I have such an understanding with an angel."

"Tell me his name then, that I may apply to him immediately, and get these fires quenched that burn me up in their conflicting flames."

"Nay, his name I cannot tell you, for one man's angel comes not to another man's call. But I may tell you this, that I entertained him unawares one autumn night when I sat late at my studies, and took him in from the howling wind and driving rain. And at midnight it befell that we strove together, until I prevailed. Then I discovered his nature and would not let him go until I had given him a gift, for had not I, his host, overcome him in my own house?"

"And what gift gave you to the angel?"

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"I gave him all my worldly care, and 'tis he who in exchange for this has shown me many a heavenly sight in a quiet hour."

"Why, Giulio, you contradict yourself. Did you not say you saw these things with the eyes that loved Delia?"

"Yes, indeed, my poor Rinaldo, but without my angel mine eyes would never have seen Delia who, though she knows it not, has eyes the very twins of his. So now you understand the whole. But tell no man, or it will be said I lust and long for Delia, which I do with my whole soul, but with patience, for I know that I possess her infinitely as no other man may."

"How can this be? She is to be married on Tuesday to this Count of Monterosso."

"He may marry her if he can, and beget children in her, but, as I said, she has the eyes of my angel, and though she bear him ten thousand children, nay, though she walk through fire and water for the sake of her vow to him, God has wedded her to me, and it is with me that she shall walk in Earthly Paradise."

"How can you abide this worldly marriage then?"

"I have been warned that her time has not yet come, and that her way and mine would only

meet now to her destruction. She is very young yet, Rinaldo, and, for some, experience is better than precept. This I saw in her eyes, which know me, and yet which will for a while know me not."

"Giulio, my friend, contemplation has thinned your blood. If I loved Delia as you say you do, I should seize her to-night and carry her off from her father's house."

"I dare say you would be right, Rinaldo, for there is not the same gulf between you and Delia that there remains to be bridged between Delia and me."

"Oh! The pride of it and the conceit!" cries Rinaldo. "Hearken, birds and trees, to the heresy of Giulio! A lover is above his mistress, a servant better than the lady, one that worships at her feet diviner than his heart's goddess! Peck out his eyes, O birds, and trees, whip him with your idle branches! Giulio Benedetto has controverted the laws of love."

"Hear my defence, Rinaldo," I laugh. "In the first place I did not make it clear whether she or I stood upon the heavenly side of the gulf, nor did I tell you the nature of the gulf."

"Speak up, then. Why do you withhold your body from Delia's service while yet there is time?"

"Because I am older than she by a thousand

years, and I do not wish to crush her with my age. Also I have found my truth for good or ill and it is weak with my soul's weakness. I believe Delia will find a stronger truth if I do not bury her beneath the mountain of my sins."

"Nay, Giulio, this is talk. In your heart of hearts I believe pride keeps you from Delia."

"Call it pride then, Rinaldo, but add fear, and tender hesitation to spread my cloud upon the virgin morning of a life."

"You will be in a lonely grave for this, Giulio."

"So be it, then. We shall all be punished for our sins. If this is a sin, you have seen it, Rinaldo. Did I not promise to show you my sins to-day?"

"Forgive me, Giulio, my dear. I did not intend to make you ashamed. Your tenderness seemed mawkish to me, but then I am a fiend for seizing and slashing, and for putting my foot on the face of Fortune if she bowls her wheel down an alley out of my way."

"Well, here we are at the top of the mountain, Rinaldo, and before we rest and refresh ourselves with the pies and sweetmeats Marta has prepared for us, let me, like the devil, show you the seven kingdoms of the world."

We come now to the farther edge of the mountain top, and far below our feet the valley

flows out toward the thin blue hills, which change in the sun and wind like a distant crested ocean, and break here and there into the peaked whiteness of a town, where the sun strikes.

"Ah, I feel I am an eagle, Giulio!" cries Rinaldo. "Show me your seven kingdoms, and let me possess them instantly if they are any finer than this glorious translucent world that shines beneath us."

"You possess the first of the seven kingdoms, nay, two of them, as I hear by your sighs."

"Which be they?"

"Dominion of the eyes and of the heart. But for you, if you wish, I dare say there is dominion of the sword, if you care to oust our Duke who has given himself over to Arcadian pleasures."

"Save yourself the trouble of mentioning any further of your kingdoms, devil Giulio. I am content with the first two. Come, let us sit here in the shade of this pine and have our dinner. I have fallen madly in love with your hill. Who owns it? I will make it my ambition to become possessed of it. Henceforth, I declare, the Hill of Cloves is my mistress and lady."

"Then the devil has not tempted you in vain!"

"Giulio, you are a child for nonsense, and I believe you are Delia's nursling and notherlover."

"Well, that may be, let us have dinner, and

afterwards, if you like, we will continue our discourse, but for the moment my stomach craves one or two of Marta's pies and a long drink of this excellent wine."

Thereupon we sit down, and for a while give ourselves to gluttony, which sometimes ceases to be a sin and becomes an exaltation.

Now does the slothful contentment of afternoon steal upon us, and Rinaldo and I become silent in thought and word. Presently Sleep herself, with quiet feet, comes nigh. Her gentle hand smoothes down our lids, and we lose at her bidding two hours of the day. But I die from the world to dream of Delia.

Though I dream that I have lost Delia I know in my dreams how short my loss will be, and feel among my torments the joy of one who suffers for imperishable delight. Sweet and dear are the pains which I suffer for Delia, not only in my dreams, but in secret, unknown to Rinaldo or any man. I am ashamed of the pain I bear for Delia, which is in a sense too great a joy for me. My shame is tender and pure. I do not seek it, nay, if I could I would put it from me, as saints have been known to put from them certain torments, in shame that they should suffer so great an honour from Our

Lord. Who am I, that of all men living, I should bear pain for the innocent grace that I have seen in Delia's eyes? Nay, the sweet grace I have seen in Delia is not the mere delight of youth, but a calm eternal quiet that shone in Eve's eyes at her first awakening, and in Our Lady's when the angel knelt before her with the perfect salutation. Hail, Delia! I am no angel to announce the perfection of thy innocence. But I have vowed to bear the pain of thy innocence with a pure shame.

I am awake, and lie among the sweet-smelling heath, full of blessed pain. The afternoon drowzes toward evening. The heavy bees hang in the flowers about my ears. It comes upon me to wonder how I shall pass the other thirty years of my life, the years that have no childhood before them. No more shall I make a beginning either of love or sin, for I am well on the way with both. I shall not be amazed again, suddenly and unawares, for the first time with the rustle of love's wings that stir a wind in the secret glades of the soul. And the time is near when I must trust the memory of Delia to my own inner sight, and shall no longer be able to refresh the saint in me with her presence. O Delia! Even as the sight of Beatrice created in Dante a living universe in accord with the heavenly word, so has the sight of thee shown

me instantly the harmony of these little flowers about me with the empyrean. Blessed is he who can see the mystical unity of God's creation! Blessed is she who bears in her body the light of the world! Yea, though she knows it not in her sweet ignorance, blessed is she who sees, as Delia sees, no weary day about her, but every day opens her eyes upon the first dawn!

"What have you in mind, Giulio?" says the voice of Rinaldo, and I start and come suddenly to myself from afar off.

"You recall me from a mystic contemplation of the Word of God."

"How see you this Word, Giulio? It must indeed be a glorious living thing to you, for you have lain an hour with your eyes open and un-beholding."

"One little hour!" I laugh. "Were it not for the weakness of my body, which drives me continually out of Paradise, I could pass a thousand lives in continual contemplation of this marvel, and have seen in comparison with the wonder of it, even so, almost nothing."

"But you have spoken to me of Earthly Paradise and Heavenly Paradise!"

"Ah, Rinaldo," I sigh, "I have mentioned an angel, and have portrayed in a few words the

outward semblance of a garden, but though I speak until the end of the world, I shall never declare even the beginning of God's grace, nor the least significance of the first word that God spoke in his creation."

"What word was that, Giulio?"

"What? Has your memory been so long from school, Rinaldo?"

"Enlighten me, I pray you!"

"You have said it yourself. 'Let there be light!'"

"You laugh, Giulio. I see that my prating has destroyed your dreams. You have put on the voice of the priest when he sets out to catechise little boys. Now if you tell me anything of the divine cosmogony, you will speak words with an oft-repeated tang about them."

"As you will," I say. "But the day is far advanced. Let us arise and make our way down among the shadows of evening, for you have a vow to perform, and I by chance shall see Delia among her companions."

"I must indeed burn my wheel?"

"Indeed, you must burn my wheel, since I won it from you on a wager."

"So be it, then, but it goes hard."

We are now well set out on our way home. The

sun is low in the heavens, and already the valley beneath us is full of evening. For a long while we are silent. I am walking ahead and Rinaldo is lagging with his thoughts behind. He is at that time of life when it is hard for the feet to go down hill, and for the heart to come down from the heights. At length he comes up with me and cries passionately:

“Stay a moment, Giulio, you have shown me this hill of yours to-day in a very showman-like and thorough manner. You have also deprived me of an ambition that kept my idleness from the devil. You have hinted, too, that all that mine eyes behold is but a ha’porth of the glory that is. Tell me now, what shall I do with to-morrow and the next day and the innumerable days beyond? Truly sometimes life seems dismally long and the end of it as far off as eternity.”

“Stay a moment, Rinaldo,” I cry. “You have hurried down toward the grave out of my reach! Return to-day!”

“If I stay still, I feel my flame burn me up. I must go forth, Giulio, I must go forth, even if it is only with my will!”

“To what end?”

“To what end?” Rinaldo sighs a deep sigh. “To the far end—death in the end, I suppose.”

"No doubt there is death in the end unless, like Elijah, your flame carries you alive to heaven! But in the meantime we have the honour to be men, which is beyond the power of angels!"

"We have the honour to toil like slaves to keep the breath in our bodies, and if we toil not, to sin like Cæsars as a pastime. And we are continually haunted all the time with a spirit that cries 'Arise, go forth!' To still that spirit, some of us have drowned ourselves in debauchery and others have drowned themselves in death, for how shall a man go forth who is chained to the plough, or wherefore arise when he knoweth not whither to depart?"

"You ask me a very old question, Rinaldo, which but for this body I could answer at once. Tell me a thing, what shall I do with the days to come when I no longer see Delia?"

"For you it is all very well. Have you not a pen? In those hours when your public duties do not chain you, for I have heard it said you are likely to be elected a magistrate shortly, why in your leisure you have sufficient poetry in you to write a new Divine Comedy beginning with the void, and ending, as Dante's did, in the very heart of Heavenly Paradise!"

"If I had your fury perhaps, Rinaldo."

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"If I had your mistress, Giulio, I would conquer hell itself."

"Between us we have the fury and the mistress, Rinaldo! Cry 'done' and let you and I cease counting the hours on a string, and go forth together in the divine name of love, with poetry in our right hand and fury in our hearts, to conquer every dragon that strangles beauty."

"What mean you, Giulio?" says Rinaldo in half a breath.

I feel already he is prepared to dash forth and slaughter legions of imagined fiends.

"You and I have basked long enough in the sun, you at the True Vine and I amid Marta's comforts. Let us get up and go out to liberate Paradise from the dark cloud that obscures it from men's eyes."

"Why, how?"

"All day we will seek Paradise, and chase the devil whenever possible, and every evening sing songs in praise of heaven; and so that men shall know we are not dreamers with wild heads, I shall tell the story of Delia in my songs, and you shall chant the Hill of Cloves which you took for your mistress this morning, and truly I shall be jealous of you, for she has been until now my earthly lady!"

"Nay, make me your esquire in this enterprise."

"Agreed!"

"How shall we proceed?"

"To-morrow bring your guitar, which I know you play very well, to my house, and at dawn you and I will set out into the world."

"Then you mean indeed to depart?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Blessed Giulio, I was in doubt you contemplated some studentish metaphorical voyage! Now I am with you to the death!"

"To the death, Rinaldo, in Delia's name!"

"Truly, Giulio," cries Rinaldo, "I feel my feet move along the road to Paradise already."

"Here we are at the bridge again, and there," I say, beginning to quake all over, "are Delia and her friends at their evening diversions. See with what grace she runs!"

I take Rinaldo's hand.

"Hold, Rinaldo!" I say thickly in my throat. "This is my last sight of Delia, and when she greets me as I pass by, she will little know that 'tis her valediction. How strange that out of our random talk should come my departure from this place where even the stones are sacred to me for Delia's sake!"

"I can but half believe you mean to go," says Rinaldo.

"We must often act on half-belief, Rinaldo, and be glad of it. I knew long ago the time would come, but when or how I did not know. It is a grievous pain, a crown of thorns to my heart, but I am content. Nay, I am suddenly aware that, contrary to my words, I shall tell Delia of my departure. Bear with me now, Rinaldo, and do not leave me while I accost her in the name of God."

We move, and make our way across the darkening turf towards the city gate. Delia and her company prepare also to abandon their sport and are gathering in groups of two or three to go homeward.

We meet Delia under the archway of the gate as she stands a while to watch the last of the day. Her eyes are full of the evening light and her face shines like the evening star.

I bow to Delia, and she with sudden wonderment looks in my face.

"Hail and farewell, Delia," I cry in a voice that is not my voice. Delia does not speak, and I faint almost with the question her eyes ask of me.

"The time has now come," I reply. "Remember me when you enter into bliss!"

Delia looks down at the ground then, and I, before she can recover herself, hurry Rinaldo through the dark gate into the town.

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"How shall a man hardly forego his saint!" cries Rinaldo.

"That he may carry her with him through the whole world," I answer, "and not coop her in the dungeon of his heart."

And with that we fall silent against to-morrow, which for us is the beginning of the world.

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